

## Faces of HOPE: Casey Snaza



*Written by Casey Snaza, Drop-in Center Program Manager*

I recently celebrated my one-year anniversary as the [Drop-In Center](#) Program Manager for HOPE 4 Youth. In high school, I felt the pressure to pursue a fancy four-year degree in a major I likely wouldn't have utilized, anthropology. The summer before college, I began working at a summer camp and found a passion for working with young people. I immediately switched to attending a community college while I explored my newfound passion for youth by working in a community youth program. It solidified my desire to support underserved youth. I pursued a bachelor's in social work and found my way through a few jobs that felt like the wrong size puzzle piece.

When I started at HOPE 4 Youth, I knew I was exactly where I was supposed to be.

HOPE 4 Youth emphasizes a model of intensive case management that focuses on achieving goals towards long term stability. The day to day of this job can weigh heavily on my shoulders. Homelessness is not a problem within itself, yet a symptom of other issues. It stems from domestic violence and abuse, homophobia, and systemic racism. It comes from untreated mental health, addictions, and trauma. If we don't address these problems, we will not end youth homelessness.

One of our young adults has struggled more than many of us can imagine. Trauma, homelessness, addiction, and severe mental health brought him to an all-time low with an attempted overdose. He found himself at HOPE 4 Youth the following day looking for help. We talked together and I suggested that he go to the hospital. Having had this conversation with many before, I only expected at most for him to think about it, but he said "Okay". He said it would be best for him to go by ambulance because otherwise, he might not go. It has now been 8 months since that conversation, and he has maintained his sobriety through the hospital, treatment, and sober home. He is currently living on his own, has a car, and has a stable job. I am so proud of him, but even better is that he is proud of himself.



My role at HOPE 4 Youth has taught me more than I ever could have learned in school. My day-to-day work involves collaboration with other organizations, case management, and overseeing the Drop-In Center. As our mission states, we strive to end youth homelessness and I believe we can do it, but we can't do it alone. The concept of community practice is something I firmly believe in.

We have the tools in our community to support one another and to end youth homelessness if we all work together.

HOPE 4 Youth collaborates with Anoka County, Stepping Stone, YMCA, StreetWorks and others to meet the needs of our youth. We are a brokerage of services to connect youth to a variety of supports in the community.

I firmly believe you don't need to have a career in the field, or to have a lot of money or time to make an impact. Our volunteers dedicate their time to our mission and have built the organization from the ground up. From serving a meal, to ordering items from our wish list, or committing as a weekly mentor, volunteers can make a big impact on the youth we serve.

This fall, I will be going back to school for my Master's in Social Work with an emphasis on community practice. Thanks to HOPE 4 Youth, I have found hope for my future and courage within myself to be a conduit of change.

This story is part of a series profiling people who've come together to support HOPE 4 Youth's mission to offer young people pathways out of homelessness. [Read more profiles.](#)